

**Direct Certification of Children from Food Stamp or TANF Households  
Under the School Nutrition Programs**

**Purpose:**

This instruction sets forth the policy for direct certification of children from food stamp or TANF households.

**Scope:**

Sponsors participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

**Description:**

Direct Certification was made mandatory by the 2004 Child Nutrition Program Reauthorization (P.L. 108-265) in the following schedule:

- SY 2006-2007-LEAs with 25,000 or more students
- SY 2007-2008-LEAs with 10,000 or more students
- SY2008-2009 all LEAs

By School Year 2008-2009, all organizations participating in the National School Lunch Program must utilize Direct Certification techniques as a part of their application approval process.

Direct Certification is the process under which local education agencies certify children who are members of households receiving assistance under the Food Stamp or TANF Program, as eligible for free school meals, without further application, based on information provided by the State/local agency administering the Food Stamp Program.

To accomplish this purpose the Indiana Department of Education, Division of School and Community Nutrition Programs has developed a variety of web-based programs to assist school districts and non public nutrition program sponsors in carrying out this mandate.

Information can be found at the Division's website: <http://doe.state.in.us/food> on the Department's STN website: <http://doe.state.in.us/STN>

The LEA must notify the household that:

- a child is eligible for free benefits,
- no further application is necessary, and
- the household must notify school officials if they do not want free benefits for their children.

LEAs must ensure that families receive either a direct certification notification or an application for free and reduced-price school meals. Delivery of Benefits: The LEA must provide benefits promptly. Eligible students may receive benefits immediately and the LEA may assume consent if refusal has not been received by a certain number of days, as determined by the LEA. If the household refuses benefits, the LEA must discontinue benefits immediately and document the refusal. Benefits must be discontinued as soon as possible if the household notifies the school that they decline benefits.

**SOURCE:** LETTERS DATED JULY 16 AND 18, 1990, FROM THE USDA REGIONAL DIRECTOR USDA FY 05 SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS POLICY MEMORANDUM #05-05 P.L. 108-265.